

**UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS LOWELL
CENTER FOR LOWELL HISTORY
ORAL HISTORY COLLECTION**

**SHIFTING GEARS PROJECT
LAWRENCE**

INFORMANT: MARY (PECCERILLO) LYNCH

INTERVIEWER: YILDEREY ERDENER

DATE: MAY 16, 1989

Y = YILDEREY

M = MARY

SG-LA-T546

Y: Today is May 16, 1989. And I am with Mary Peccerillo Lynch. Peccerillo is spelled, P E (--
)

M: C C E R I L L O.

Y: This is her maiden last name. And she married a person. And uh, her last name is ?

M: Lynch.

Y: Lynch. L?

M: L Y N C H (spells)

Y: Right. And uh, I am uh, what is the location, or ?

M: This is 45 Broadway, Lawrence.

Y: I'm at her apartment.

M: Uh, 605.

Y: 605. [clears throat] Okay. What is your birth date? When were you born?

M: I was born the first month, January. Well see I was born the seventh, but the City Hall has the twelfth. I didn't know it until I went to school. (Y: Oh) And then when I went to school and they says my birth certificate was the twelfth, I've always gone with the twelfth.

Y: So it's January (--)

M: January twelfth, 1907.

Y: 1907. And where were you born?

M: I was born on 233 Oak Street, across the high school.

Y: Oh, is the house still there?

M: No. No..

Y: No? And um, where did you go to school?

M: I went to years to the Amesbury School, two years to the Cross School, and two years to the Oliver School.

Y: Why so many changes?

M: Well that's the way they, they used to have, move us. I don't know, I don't know why. (Y: But you uh) The first and second grade, third and fourth, fifth and sixth, seventh and eighth.

Y: And you're uh, ethnic background? Your parents came from Italy? (M: Yeah) When did they come, do you know?

M: Oh no, I don't know the year they came.

Y: But what other?

M: My mother, no. My mother, my father was here. And then my uh, my mother's mother, she lived with her grandmother. Her mother died when she was young. And uh, she lived with her grandmother. When her, my mother, she had a brother here. And when her grandmother died her brother sent for her. And so she came here and he married her off.

Y: Um, okay. And you don't remember the date when they came?

M: When they got married?

Y: Yeah, do you?

M: Oh gee, I had it, but I don't know if I have it now.

Y: Do you know their birth dates, your parents?

M: Oh yeah! (Y: When uh) My mother, oh, I don't know the year.

Y: Do you know the year? That's good enough.

M: No, I don't know the year. (Y: No!) No. Well my mother was going to be, she was seventy-four. Wait.

Y: Umhm. And she died at the age of seventy?

M: She was going to (--) She died in March, the 7th of March, and her birthday was going to be seventy-four the 22nd of October.

Y: What year?

M: I don't know the year, you've got to subtract it.

Y: So how old was she when she died?

M: Seventy (--) She was going to be seventy-four in uh, in October.

Y: Seventy-four. What year? I mean when did you, when did she die? Do you know?

M: Uh, 1952.

Y: 1952. She was seventy-four years old.

M: She was going to be seventy-four.

Y: She was going to be seventy-four years old.

M: Yeah, she was seventy-three.

Y: All right. And um, so let's talk about this picture first. (M: Yeah) Although we talked about this picture when you came to the Immigrant City Archives, so this is you from the left?

M: Yes, that's me.

Y: Right. And uh, how old were you then when you were born 190 (--)

M: I was born in 1907.

Y: Seven, so you were five years old?

M: Five years old. Yeah. But I don't know, this picture, it must have been taken in the summer, because we were all without coats, you know. It was taken outside.

Y: And so your whole family, what is your sister's name?

M: Elisa.

Y: Elisa, and your uh, (--)

M: My brother's name is Joseph.

Y: And the whole family, the whole uh, (M: The whole three of us) did you, did you have, did you have any other sisters or brothers besides?

M: No. No, my mother(--) My mother was carrying my other sister, because when we came back from here, these, these people, the Contes, they wanted to adopt me. (Y: Which people) The people I was with. (Y: In uh, in uh) In Barre, Vermont. Their name was Conte.

Y: Conte? How do you spell it, do you know?

M: C O N T E (Spells it)

Y: C O N T E?

M: Yeah

Y: C O N T E. So they wanted to uh (--)

M: They wanted to adopt me.

Y: They like you huh?

M: Yeah, they liked me. [giggles] And uh, and uh, when they took, when we went home, they told my mother they wanted to adopt me. My mother said, no! You know? And they told her, they says, well you're having another child. You know? So you'll have another child. She says, no. So I didn't get adopted.

Y: Yeah, well she was smart.

M: They were, they had one son. (Y: Conte family?) Yeah. (Y: Umhm) They had one son and we used to correspond. But while we were there they were theater people. (Y: Umhm) They used to run shows to make money to send to Lawrence, you know? And uh, where my sister was, they were dress makers. I don't know their name. I don't remember their name.

Y: Elisa huh?

M: Yeah. Her name is Elisa Peccerillo Ferraro.

Y: And uh, so how, you don't remember how long you stayed in Barre?

M: I don't remember. That there I don't know. I never remembered.

Y: Do you remember how you went from here?

M: The train. (Y: by train?) Yeah. Took the train over here. Where are we? Across the street. It used to be the Depot.

Y: And do you remember your parents telling you that you are going away for awhile?

M: Yeah, yeah. (Y: What did they?) Oh they, that, I really uh, I don't really, but I remember my mother crying when we went away. But we went and we had good homes. And we didn't think of uh, you know, coming back like. I know I didn't. You know? Like my brother went, they took my brother to New Jersey. And we never saw or heard from him. And one day we were looking at the newspaper and we saw, I saw his picture, well we did. We saw his picture in the paper. He was working for a milkman. That's how we got in touch with him.

Y: Well he's here in Vermont?

M: No, no. He was in Hoboka, New Jersey.

Y: Well how did they take the picture together?

M: This is when we went?

Y: Before, that is in Lawrence?

M: Yeah, in Lawrence. I think in Lawrence, or over there. I don't remember.

Y: I thought this is taken when you arrived there.

M: Well maybe we did on the steps. I know it was some kind of steps, you know?

Y: Umhm. I see. So, but where was Lisa, your sister?

M: She was with us. Well she was with me. She was not too far from me living. I was on one street, she was on another.

Y: And this Conte family, was Italian?

M: Yeah, oh yeah. They were Italian. They were from the Northern part of Italy. We called them [Aldidalia?].

Y: How [unclear]?

M: [Ald-idalia]

Y: Aldi, all Italy?

M: Alda, Alda. Higher. (Y: Higher) They spoke the real Italian. You know?

Y: Umhm, umhm. And uh, you don't remember how long you stayed there? (Y: No I don't)
And then uh, you don't remember how you came back?

M: No. I don't remember that. I don't remember. (Y: Right)

Y: And uh, who else do you know in this picture?

M: I only know this man.

Y: Who was uh (--)

M: His name is Angelo Cavinelli, he's dead now.

Y: How do you spell, do you know?

M: C A V, [pronounces Cav] I , nello.

Y: Like that?

M: Cavinello, yeah.

Y: With two l's?

M: Cavinelle, E.

Y: E?

M: That's i, i. Yeah, Cavinelli.

Y: And who was he, Angelo Cavinelli?

M: He was just an Italian man.

Y: How do you know his last name and so forth?

M: Well because they were good friends with my father. I think they come from the same town in Italy. I'm not sure. But they were very good. We visited. When we were kids my mother used to take us, we used to go visit them. Yeah.

Y: And so you came back and then what happened?

M: That's what ended it. Because we came back, that's all, that's all I can remember. We came back loaded with suitcases full of clothes. See, they were dress makers where my sister was.

And they made us a lot of clothes when we came back. That day I can remember.

Y: Yeah. And what else do you have from that stay. I mean you were too young. I (--)

M: Well when, when we were there we used to go to shows, plays, not show, plays. And the woman that I, that I lived with, she was like the leading lady.

Y: Umhm. (M: You know?) So uh, they made (--) Okay. So you came to Lawrence, you went to school?

M: Oh yeah, I went to school.

Y: And uh, when did you stop going to school?

M: Well I went to school as far as the eight grade. Then I went to high, I started high school. And um, and I didn't like it so I quit.

Y: What year more or less was that?

M: Well that was, I was five, five years old. If I went to school during that year, during that year in September I went to school. And I went eight years. (Y: Umhm) So twelve and eight (Y: twenty) is twenty. (Y: Umhm) And then I went to high school the following year. (Y: Twenty-one) And then I quit. (Y: Then what?) Then I went to night school. (Y: Night?) I went to evening school, and I graduated from evening school.

Y: Umhm. When did you start working?

M: I was, (--)

Y: After graduating from the night (--)

M: Yeah, well I was working. When I went to night school I was working.

Y: Where?

M: In the Ayer Mill.

Y: Ayer Mill?

M: Yup. I worked there twenty six years. But be (--) No, I was working in the Washington Mill. I worked there oh, about two or three years.

Y: That was the first mill?

M: The first mill.

Y: Washington Mill

M: I worked there two, three years. I don't remember how many years I worked there. Then I went to work in the Ayer Mill. And I worked there twenty six years.

Y: In the Ayer Mill?

M: Until the mill closed in 19 (--)

Y: When was that.

M: The Mill closed '51.

Y: Twenty-six years.

M: Yeah.

Y: Ayer Mills. And uh, what did you do in the Washington Mill?

M: I was a, I was a doffer. A spinner. I was a doffer first and then I was a spinner. And when I went from the Washington Mill to the Ayer Mill, I went as a spinner. But the Washington Mill, I was a doffer and a spinner.

Y: How did you find job in the Washington Mill, or (M: look) the Ayer Mill? In those days how, what people (--)

M: We used to go look. In the Ayer Mill, when I worked, when I went to the Ayer Mill, well my sister was working there. So she asked for me for a job there. They were looking for spinners. And she asked for me and I went to work with her in the Ayer Mill.

Y: Hm. Was it uh, did you like your job there in Ayer Mill, what you did? Spinning?

M: I was a spin, a spinner. It was a hard job. But I worked there twenty-six years. The people were nice.

Y: I mean was it, was it fun working there?

M: Oh no, no fun. But we had a chance to, to talk with the other people, you know. Yeah, well it was good.

Y: I mean did you like the job, or did you like the people.

M: I liked both. That's the only job I knew, you know? I never had a better job, and I never had a worse job.

Y: You didn't try to find another job?

M: No, no. As long as I was working I didn't.

Y: How come? Many people changed (--)

M: Well years ago it was hard to change. Today it's easier.

Y: In those days it was not?

M: It was hard. See, like today they have McDonald's and Burger King's and all them little restaurants you can get a job, even though the pay isn't. But you could get a job, you know. But years ago everybody depended on the mills. The only time that it was a little better to find a job is when the mills closed. Then Raytheon come in, Western Electric come in. A lot of electrical places came in. Then it was easier. But when I was a kid it wasn't easy. We, we hung on to our job, but the pay was lousy. Until Roosevelt got in I was making nine dollars and two cents a week. When Roosevelt got in then we got, the minimum was 14.92. I always remember that. That's the year that Columbus discovered America.

Y: And while you were working there twenty-six years, did you try to do your best?

M: I always did my best. (Y: Always?) As long as I worked for somebody, it was, they paid me and I gave them a day's work.

Y: But you did not feel they are using you, (M: No, no. No, no) they are exploiting you, because they were paying you so low wage.

M: Yeah, well that's what, that was the wages. And while I worked there we went out on two strikes.

Y: Where?

M: The Ayer Mill.

Y: Which one, the one was that?

M: Oh, I don't, I don't remember the year. One was uh, 10%, we won that. Then the other one, I don't know how much they wanted. Oh we went back to work, we didn't get it.

Y: Yeah. Another question is uh, did you feel kind of satisfied what you did there? I mean you have a good brain, but you did a boring (--)

M: Well first of all I didn't have the education.

Y: Well you had night school and everything.

M: Night school, yeah. But night school two hours a week, six hours a week. But I mean to

say, but no, there were no jobs. There were no jobs. The mills, everybody depended on the mills. But no, there were no jobs. There were no jobs. The mills, everybody depended on the mills. See we have the Pacific Mills, the Everett Mill, the Washington Mill, the Ayer Mill, the wood Mill. You fill the Wood Mill with people, that's a lot of people.

Y: Where did your parents work?

M: My mother, my mother didn't work after she got married. She went to work after my sister Amelia was born.

Y: What's her name? Mila?

M: Amelia. (Y: Amelia? And you called her Lisa ?) Well that's her name. Alisa is her name.

Y: Is her American name I guess.

M: No, no, no, no.

Y: Why did you say Lisa then?

M: Yeah, that's her name. (Y: Amelia?) Amelia, yeah. Yeah, Amelia, Amelia, that's her name. Amelia. Where did I get Elisa? My mother's name was Elisa.

Y: Yeah. How do you spell it. (M: My mother's name was Ju(--)) How do you spell? A (--)

M: A M E L I A

Y: I E. A M (--)

M: A M E L I A.

Y: That's a nice name, Amelia.

M: Yeah. Amelia, yeah, yeah. Erase that off.

Y: Okay, but your brother's name is still Joseph?

M: Joseph.

Y: [Chuckles] I'm sorry I'm confusing you. Okay, uh, so did you feel kind of satisfaction, you know, when you worked there?

M: Well I had satisfaction because I was helping my family. We were all helping my family. My brother, my brother worked pin boy, he worked with the milkman, and then he went to work in the mill. He had three job, you know? At night he'd go set up pins right here on Franklin Street, on Hampshire Street. And in the morning he'd go with the milkman. And we used to get

four quarts of milk a day for free, because the milkman didn't pay him, you know, but we got four quarts of milk a day. (Y: A day?) A day.

Y: That was the pay?

M: That was his pay. So that was good. And then one time I remember, I remember this. He was still going out with this milkman. He was a German fellow. And uh, Glennies was the milkman company. My brother wanted a bicycle, and my mother was afraid to buy him one. She was afraid of accidents. Although there was no cars like there is today. Anyway my, she said no, and she meant no, you know? So the milkman gave him a dollar a week to pay on his bicycle. And he paid forty-four dollars for that bicycle. Years ago forty-four dollars was a lot of money. And he had that bicycle for years. The milkman gave him a dollars a week out of his own pay.

Y: That was a nice uh, gesture. (M: Yeah) So your mother did not work, and (--)

M: No, my mother didn't work, but she worked I don't know how many weeks after she was born. Because she had to buy, she had to buy two new beds. You know? Because we were (--)
No, no, this is wrong. This is Elisa, Amelia lives here. No, this is Elisa. This is my oldest sister. That's right. See I was thinking. I said, I've got four, three sisters, how come now there's only two. Yeah, no, this is Elisa. This is right.

Y: Elisa spells, E L.

M: E L I S A.

Y: I S A. And uh, Amelia is the youngest one?

M: She's the one that was born when I come over.

Y: Where is she?

M: She lives upstairs. Yeah.

Y: The whole family is here, huh?

M: Yeah, well.

Y: And where did your father work?

M: My father worked in the mill, Washington Mill. He worked in the department where they washed the cloth. They used to have bolt of material, you know, and then they used to sew them together. You know, and put them in this machine. Vats, they used to call them vats, where the water was. And they used to go around. And uh, he worked there in the wintertime. In the Spring he used to go and work outside in the Railroad to make a little extra money. Because the mills never ran really steady all the time. You know, there was always slacks in the mill. And in

the summertime he worked outside.

Y: And when you got your pay envelope, did you keep the money?

M: Oh no. (Y: What did you do?) I never opened. Years ago we used to get money in the envelope. You know, I never opened my envelope. Bring my envelope right home.

Y: Gave, gave it to your mother.

M: Oh yeah.

Y: She was the one who handled the financial matters?

M: See, my brother, all the kids he went with, they were all happy-go-luckies. But in my house we had to work straight and out. We had everything. Good food, dressed good. We were the only, my brother especially, he was the only kid in the neighborhood that had two pairs of shoes. One for school and one for church. See, the other kids, no. They got spending money. They (--)
My brother, while my brother was living at home, before he got married, my father bought him three brand new cars. Three of them. The first one was a Ford, 1927. He bought a Ford. Then he bought a, a Durant. And then his last car was a Studabaker. Was a seven passenger car. And the undertaker, the Italian undertaker (Perticelli?) was a friend of my father. And when there was a funeral he used to get him to go drive that car at the funeral. And he used to get ten dollars. He used to go away weekends with the kids, with the fellows, my mother never took his pay. He says, you take the pay, this is your spending money and this if the pay. Don't spend this unless something happens, you have to spend it for the car, or (--)
He come home, give my mother the envelope with the money.

Y: What is your father's name?

M: Vergilio. (Y: Again?) Vergilio.

Y: How do you spell it?

M: V E R G I L I O.

Y: Your mother's name?

M: My mother's name was Joanina, Joanna.

Y: Joanina. (M: Joanina) Joanina, that's a nice name. How did she changed her name?

M: Her name was Sylvestri.

Y: Here they called her Sylvestri?

M: Her maiden name was Sylvestri.

Y: Yeah, but uh, did people (--)

M: Well her, like last (--) See I have two nieces now and they named after my mother, but they named her the American way, Joanna. See.

Y: And people call you mother what? Joanna, or Joanina.

M: Joanina.

Y: Joanina? (M: Yeah) And did your brother and other sister also give the pay envelope.

M: Well all did. We all did.

Y: All? Without opening?

M: Without opening it.

Y: Did you get any uh, spending money?

M: Oh yeah, we got spending money. Oh yeah. (Y: How much?) Oh in the beginning we used to get fifty cents. I remember that. Then after we got more.

Y: Well you did not have time to spend.

M: No, we worked. We worked over eight hours at work. Come home, we had to do everything at home.

Y: Do you remember? Were you tired when you came home from the mills?

M: Oh lots of days I was tired. Then as the years went on my mother got sick. You know, and I worked, come home, take care of my mother and father. Oh yeah, I had a hard life.

Y: So did you have any time doing other things? Having fun, going to movies and dances?

M: Yeah, we used to go to the movies twice a week. Dances, no.

Y: Twice?

M: Yeah, we used to go to the movies.

Y: Which movies did you go?

M: Oh, on Broadway here. There was a lot of movies. We used to go Wednesdays and Saturday nights, (Y: why Wednesday) a bunch of girls.

Y: Why Wednesdays?

M: They used to change the pictures on Wednesday.

Y: And Saturdays?

M: And Saturday they used to change. Wednesdays and Saturdays. Saturdays we used to go, we used to go to the, the show we used to call it. And then go out to eat.

Y: What about dances?

M: Oh, we never went to dances. (Y: Never?) Never cared.

Y: Did you hang up with Italian girls, or it did not matter which (--)

M: Well I really didn't, I was more or a Mama's girl. You know? I was always with my mother. And uh, I never cared to get married. And my mother used to tell me, you should get married, because we're getting old. He says, and when we die your sisters, they're all married. Your brother is married, they're going to have families of their own. They ain't going to bother with you. You know? Well then finally he came along. [Laughs] Well I had a cousin that worked with him. And he always told me, he said, there's a nice fellow works with me.

Y: Why, why didn't you want not to be married?

M: Well I was too close to my mother. It isn't good to be too close. You know?

Y: Mama's girl, huh?

M: Yeah.

Y: You were not the youngest one? The youngest ones are usually (--)

M: I know. The youngest one, oh the youngest one, she went out more. And she got married young the youngest one.

Y: And uh, at the Ayer's Mill, did you socialize with the Italian girls more than?

M: More or less they were all Italians. Italian and French. There was a lot of Italian and French. I, me I was friends with everybody.

Y: Yeah. What was the nickname of Italians?

M: Oh they used to call them Gineas, Daygos, Warps.

Y: What was the first one?

M: Gineas.

Y: Gineas? How do you spell?

M: I don't know.

Y: Gineas?

M: Gineas. [Chuckles]

Y: What is Gineas.

M: I don't know. Warps.

Y: Warps I heard. What was (--)

M: Daygos.

Y: Daygos? (M: Daygos) What does it mean?

M: I don't know!

Y: Are they kind of insulting.

M: Insulting, oh yeah. The Irish, the Irish were awful mean to the Italian people here. When the Italian people, when they first come from the old country like, you know, they were in the lower end. Common Street, Union Street, Newbury Street. That's where. Then they started to better themselves, like my father. My father had three kids. Well one was born over there. Then when my father bought a house here, he bought a house here, naturally (--)

Y: Where, where. Oak, (M: on Oak Street) Oak Street.

M: Oak Street. He bought it in partnership with another man. And uh, and we lived there. They lived on one side, we lived on the other side. Then after my father bought the house next door, was a six tenement house. Three in the front, three in the back. It was a big. My father bought that. You know, and uh, and then uh, [pause]. No, just Louisa was born there. Amelia was born 233, Louisa was born 237, the next house. Yeah. And uh, so then all the Italian people started coming this way. And all the Irish that lived here, they all went across the Spicket. They all moved across the Spicket.

Y: They didn't want to (--)

M: Oh no, they didn't want to mingle with the Italians. Now the Italians and the Irish, they're all friends. You know?

Y: What did you call them? What was the Irish people's nickname?

M: We didn't call them anything, because we didn't like them to call us. So we didn't call them.

Y: But they had a nickname. Do you know that? They called them something.

M: They called them the Harps. (Y: Huh?) Harps. (Y: Harps?) Harps. H A R P S.

Y: Italians?

M: The Italians called them. No but, no.

Y: What are Mics, or Mickies, or there was some, another nickname for the Irish people. What about the other ethnic groups? The nicknames? You seem to (--)

M: Oh the Polish, the Polocks.

Y: Polocks. And uh, who was uh, there was another name, I don't remember exactly. Yeah, Polocks, and uh French Canadians were called frog (M: PI's) PI's? (M: Frogs) What is PI?

M: That's Prince Edward Island. Canada.

Y: Oh. Or uh, frogs (M: frogs) they called them. Yeah. It's terrible. And what else did the Irish people do? I mean how did they uh (--)

M: Well wee they had the priest behind them. (Y: Who?) Father Riley, and they thought they were [unclear]. But the Italian people, they never made no trouble for them.

Y: Well the Italian people had Father [Milanese?].

M: Oh Father Milanese was only for himself. Not for the people. No, never.

Y: What uh, I heard uh, negative comments about him. People did not like him I have the impression. Father Milanese.

M: No, he was no good. He was a crook.

Y: What did he do?

M: Well when they bought that church, that was the Saint Lawrence O'Toole Church. They bought it. Well after they had it awhile they has a Chris(--) They bought bells. Chimes for the church. After awhile they bought that, they had to christen the bells, which is what the Catholics do, you know? So they christened the bells and they made a lot of money. You know the people, the Italian people, if they like the priest, if they like the church, they uh, they're all out for them, you know? And uh, so he got a lot of money. After awhile, I don't know how long after, they wanted, he wanted to christen the bells again. That's when my father got away.

Y: They quit going there?

M: He didn't go to church. He was a good catholic, who was good in everything. You know, but he never condemned them. He never says the Catholics are no good, or the Protestants are no (--) Never. But he didn't want to have nothing to do with them. Because you're a priest, and you know, you christen a baby only once. You want to christen the bells twice, just to make money?

Y: What did you do with the money? I heard that he also gambled with the horses and things.
(M: Oh yeah. Yeah) What did you, what do you know about that?

M: No, I don't know anything. I only hear say, you know? But uh, that's why. My mother and father, they weren't church goers.

Y: They stopped going there.

M: Yeah, they weren't church goers my mother and father.

Y: Was uh, he (--) He was not married, he was catholic priest, Father Milanese?

M: Of course, yeah. (Y: He was not) He wasn't married.

Y: What did he do with the money?

M: I don't know. That church that's there now, inside, they got so much money (--)

TAPE I, SIDE I ENDS

TAPE I, SIDE II BEGINS

SIDE TWO BEGINS WITH INFORMANT IN MID-SENTENCE:

M: To the cellar. They were suppose to be all uh, what do you call it? (Y: Gold?) No, no. Oh! The thing they put on the wall. Oh!

Y: Painted? Well you find out later. That's not important. Okay, um.

M: So he only made them half because he didn't have no more money. He spent it. The pillars in the church, they're only half. That stuff that comes from Rome. They make statues.

Y: Uh, marble?

M: Marble, marble. Them there was suppose to be made from the floor to the ceiling, all marble. And if you go in that church now, you see them only about oh, they're a lot higher than

that. Well maybe about this much. The rest is all wood I guess. I don't know.

Y: Did you work on piece work?

M: No, I never wanted piece work. After, after the mills closed I got a job in Haverhill, Ward Hill, the shoe shop. And I was uh, I was a "Jack of all trades". I did all little jobs.

Y: I mean uh, when you worked at uh(--)

M: In the mill? (Y: Mill) No, no, I never, we never worked piece work.

Y: Spinning was not uh (--)

M: No, in one mill, the Arlington Mill, the one off Broadway, that was uh, they had piece work there, but I never worked piece work. No, never. I wouldn't work piece work. But when I was working in the shoe shop (Y: Why not, is it bad?), well you got to kill yourself to uh, to get a pay. I want my steady pay, and I wasn't going to sit down and do nothing to get a pay. I worked. You now, and that's why I wasn't going to work harder just to get a little more money. No, I wouldn't. And during the war I never worked Saturdays, because my mother was sick, you know. Five days was enough. My father never wanted me to work overtime. Never worked overtime.

Y: Yeah. How did you meet your husband? You said he came along, and I interrupted you.

M: Well uh, he uh, he was working with a cousin of mine. Not a cousin, his wife was my cousin. And he used to tell him that he had a fellow worked with him. He's a good fellow. He says, "Mary, I want to introduce you to him." And I always put him off, and put him off, you know, until finally we got together. And we got married?

Y: Did you like him?

M: Oh yeah! (Y: Yeah?) I liked him when I first saw him.

Y: So it was not, your father or mother did not get upset because he was not Italian?

M: No. Oh my, my other sisters got married before me, younger than me. Not this one, the one that lives up here, and the baby, they got married at, before me. I was the only one home. And now I'm in the middle, you know? No, they're all Irish husbands, only this one here's got an Italian husband, and he (--)

Y: Is he Irish? Your husband is Irish?

M: He's Irish. Yeah, and my sister lives upstairs, her husband was Irish. And her husband, younger sister Louise, her husband is Irish.

Y: I heard Italian and Irish couples, they make a good marriage.

M: Yeah, well that's what I told you? I says, in the beginning with their mothers and fathers we were enemies. But now they, they're close.

Y: Umhm. So while you were working in the mills, Ayer Mills, you did not work eight hours, just work and work?

M: Oh no. Oh no.

Y: What else people did there as having fun. I mean uh, (--)

M: Oh nothing, (Y: nothing?) nothing. No. You go in in the morning, and it's lunch time. They had a cart go around with donuts or coffee, whatever. They give you ten minutes. And then after that you go back to work. Well the, the machines are running. They don't stop the machines for that, because you could have a cup of coffee and a donut. Whatever. Then for lunch, mid day they stop all machines for an hour, then after they start it half an hour, which was enough. We got out a half an hour earlier. And they stop, we sit on the floor. We get a bunch of girls, sit on the floor and talk, and eat. And then half past two we come home.

Y: Yeah. Did, did you feel dedicated to the American Woolen Company? Or was it such a thing among those people who work there? I mean dedication was part of it, or (--)

M: Well the dedication was, you give them a days work, they give you a days pay. That's the only dedication I could see. You know? Because it isn't to say they're giving us something for nothing, because they weren't. We gave them a good days pay at work. See? And we got our pay, we thought we were satisfied. And that's what(--) Well we were satisfied, because that's all they gave us.

Y: I guess people did not have higher expectations in those days. Wouldn't you agree?

M: No, no. See, because like people, like us. Now I worked in the Ayer Mill and uh, my, my sister worked in, she worked in the Ayer Mill. [Small disturbance] But there was nothing in Lawrence. You know? The only time, like uh, the people went out for jobs is when the mills closed. When the mills closed (--)

Y: Didn't you get upset when the mills closed?

M: Well of course we got upset, because we didn't know nothing else. I went to look for a job in Western Electric that was on South Union Street. Western Electric, and no, before that I went to (--) No, after, I went to look for a job in Western Electric. And they says over thirty I was too old.

Y: How old were you?

M: Over thirty. I was too old!

Y: It was too old?

M: Yeah! I went to work the New York, I went to uh, The New York Toy. That was in the Washington Mill. That was 19 (--) My mother (--) The mills closed '51, November. My mother passed away in March '52. (Y: '52) And uh, the following year, that year there that my mother passed away, I was, I wasn't here. I was, my mind was you know?

Y: Why, because of your mother, or because of the mills closed down [unclear]?

M: The mills closed and I had to be home all alone. And uh, I says gee, I says I'm going out of my mind. So I went to the doctor. The doctor told me, he says, get the hell out and go get yourself a job. He told me. So I went to New York Toy, that was in the Washington Mill. I was getting seventy, seventy-five cents an hour. But I liked it. I worked there almost three years.

Y: What did you do?

M: We used to pack toys.

Y: Played with the toys.

M: Pack them. Oh, they made us work hard them Jews. We worked hard for that seventy-five cents.

Y: But you liked it you said.

M: Yeah, I liked it, because I (--) All the girls that I knew from the Ayer Mill, from the Washington Mill, from the neighbors, you know, everybody went out for a job. And you couldn't get a job that paid uh, say uh, three dollars an hour.

Y: That's why you liked it? Not because it was seventy-five cents, but because of the people.

M: No, no! He didn't want me to go to work. My father was still living. He didn't want me to go to work. You know? He says, what are you going to go to work for? I said, but it's close. My father used to meet me at twelve o'clock. You know? Sometimes we used to go for lunch. And then when it was time he'd go home and I'd go back to work for the afternoon. You know, I liked it. And it was close to walk home, you know? And uh, but uh, then uh, I don't know what month it was, we got, sixty of us got laid off. We worked there six months. I got a job in January. I worked there six months.

Y: Six months at the toy place?

M: Yeah. And we got laid off, sixty of us got laid off. Where else are you going to go look for a job? You know? We didn't go. Than after awhile we were getting ready to go to the beach. I got a call. See, after six months they give you two and a half cents raise. So instead of giving you the raise, they lay you off, see? Then after a few months they call you back for seventy-five cents and hours, instead of seventy-seven and a half cents an hour. See? That's how smart they

were.

Y: Who were they?

M: I don't know who they were. They were Jews, you know? Well anyways, they uh, I worked. They called me up, we are getting more work and we'd like you go come back. I says, no, you can keep your job, I don't want it. I didn't go back. I was going to the beach. You know?

Y: What did, what are, beach for swim, for swim?

M: For the summer. Yeah, for the summer. For, we used to go for uh, three, four weeks, you know. And uh, so I didn't go back. So when I, after that, after we come back from the beech, I went to Haverhill, went and looked for a job. And I got a job in the shoe shop. And I worked there three and a half years. Almost four years I worked there. And then one uh, while I was working there my brother came to pick me up, because my father was very sick. You know? So I had to come home. Then I never went back. My uh, my father was, got better. And Eddy was working, but he didn't work in the winter. So he was home with my father during the winter. And I went back to work. And then he got sick again and then I didn't go back to work. And then he got sick again and then I didn't go back to work.

Y: Your husband's name is Eddy?

M: Eddy, yeah.

Y: Yeah. And when did you work at Western Electric then?

M: I didn't work in Western Electric. (Y: Not at all?) They wouldn't give me a job. They says I was too old, over thirty. They'd have to pay a lot of insurance. Even they told me that even in the, in the New York Toy. And I says to this girl, I says, what do you mean too old? I says, look at them women over there, they're all gray haired women. Some of them are older than I am! You know? She gave me the job.

Y: Where, in the shoe shop?

M: The New York Toy.

Y: New York toy?

M: No, the New York Toy.

Y: They also gave you, tried to give you a hard time that you are (--)

M: No, not (--) The New York Toy? Oh yeah, there too. Yeah. Because see, back then all the place of employment they had to put insurance on the people that worked. See. And they didn't want to put insurance on somebody old. That the next day, they get a job, next day drop dead and they'd have to pay them. No, not the Jews. So anyways there, that was the story.

Y: Can you tell me a little bit about hard times you had after the mills closed down. That period. People don't talk about, they don't like talking about those hard times when the mills closed down.

M: Well I told you, when the mills closed I got a job in the shoe shop.

Y: But uh, before you got the shoe shop job, uh, what did you see around you? All people lost their jobs. (M: Yeah!) How did they, what did they do?

M: They did the same thing I did, go look for a job. We couldn't get a job.

Y: Was it upsetting you?

M: Well for us it wasn't. You know why? See, my mother and father, when we worked, we brought our pay home like I told you. Brought all our money home. See, we didn't pay board. Because my father always told us, when you get a job, you want to pay board, you go pay it to somebody else, not here. See, he didn't want our money, our board money. You know? My father wanted all or nothing. But it was to our benefit. Because when we were out on slack, when we were out that the mills closed, we didn't have to worry about nothing. We got new shoes, we got new dresses, we got food. You know, we got everything. See. These kids that had to pay board, they couldn't get anything. Their mother's wouldn't buy them anything. And when they went back to work they had to pay them one week board, and so much on the, the back board.

Y: To their own parents?

M: To their own parents. We didn't have to do that, none of us. None of us.

Y: That was uh, common practice in those days?

M: Oh yeah! Yeah! Yeah!

Y: Among Italian people, or (--)

M: The Italian people, not too much. The French people and other nationalities. They used to hate when they had to be laid off, because they new they had to pay all their back board.

Y: I didn't know that.

M: Oh yeah! Those girls that worked with me, they couldn't even afford to buy a pair of stockings. See we, we never went through that. We got everything thank God.

Y: You were talking about your mother have a vegetable garden, a small garden. (M: Yeah, in the back yard) Can you tell me a little bit about that?

M: She had a small, honest to God it was this wide and as far as the China closet. Yeah, because she used to plant tomatoes, cucumbers, greens, lettuce, you know? Just a little bit of a garden.

Y: On Oak Street?

M: On Oak Street. The back yard. You know what she used to do? When the ice man used to go by, the milkman, the horses, and he'd do his duty on the street, she used to go with the shovel and pick it up and use it for the garden.

Y: That's smart.

M: Yeah.

Y: And uh, you did not have vegetable garden in Pleasant Valley?

M: No, no. No. My father never liked that. My mother took care of the little garden. My father never liked that. (Y: Why not?) He says, I didn't do it in Italy, and I won't do it here. My father, when he was in Italy he left home, he went to the city. And he worked, they were building a royal palace in Naples. And he went to work there. Made money and he come to this country.

Y: You were from Sicily were you? (M: No, no.) From Naples?

M: Naples.

Y: From uh, so Naples, people from Naples consider those people from Sicily somehow, I don't know, another ethnic nationality or something.

M: Well see, you know, like history, that history comes back. Years ago we knew that years and years and years ago in Italy they had more population, especially Sicily, is nearer to Africa, you know? And they send a lot of people to Italy, to uh, to Africa. (Y: Yeah, to Sicily) To Africa from Sicily. See. And uh, and we all, they always thought like they were like different from us. Years ago the Sicilian people, there was a lot of them that were very very dark. You know? See, because they were, they have uh, the government send them to, to Africa. They had more room in Africa.

Y: And then they came back to Sicily?

M: Well some of them. Some of them just died.

Y: I mean how, how did they become dark? If they went to Africa, they stayed there.

M: They stayed there, then they inter married. They inter married. And they were, the Africans are Black. and that's how we, this is what we used to hear, you know? But some of them were, even me as a little kid I remember. Some of them Sicilians were very dark. [Interviewer]

clearing throat in background]

Y: Yeah, in some families, family stories how they came to the United States, and troubles on the way on the boat. And are there such stories in your family? (M: Oh no.) Your mother or father, did they tell you how they arrived here in this country?

M: Oh no, we never (--)

Y: What they thought. Some people thought you can find gold on the streets, and [unclear].

M: Well they thought. Because you know why they used to say that? Because they used to write, from Italy they used to write always that they couldn't uh, they couldn't have this, they couldn't buy this. They have no money. They couldn't buy that. This and that. Everything is taxed. And the people from here used to send them stuff. You know? So they thought that we used to find money, the people here shoveled the money from the street, which wasn't true.

Y: Did you parents send money also to the people?

M: Well my father, my mother didn't have nobody. My mother had one brother and he was in this country when she came. You know? And after her grandmother died, well she, he sent for her. She came here and he married her off right away, he married her off. She had a good life though with my father. My father was a good man.

Y: So they did not send any money to Italy?

M: No, they didn't. No, they didn't have nobody.

Y: Or gifts, or presents to the relatives?

M: No. No. My father did, my father did. My father had nephews. The sister's children. There was two brothers and a sister. And uh, one of the girls was getting married, you know, and they sent them. Her, my father and her uncle, this girl's uncle on the, on the mother's side, they got together and they sent her the whole bridle outfit when she got married. Yeah. And uh, we used to sent things. Like during the war you know, where the troops, the Germans were going through their town. They buried their sewing machines, they buried a lot of stuff, you know? Naturally when the Germans went away, when they went to take it, all the machines, the sewing machines, they had a lot of stuff, part of it got rusty. They sent us, they used to draw the bobbins on the paper, send them here. And we'd go in Singers, remember Singers Sewing Machine? Go there and try to buy them and send it to them. Yeah. But then after, after my mother passed away, we wrote and told them that my mother passed away. They never wrote anymore. So I didn't write anymore.

Y: What did you do in the shoe store? What kind of job was it?

M: Me? (Y: Yeah) In the shoe shop?

Y: In Haverhill. Yeah.

M: I was a bench girl. Bench girl means you do a little bit of everything. I didn't have, I didn't work on the shoe itself. I worked on the linings, on the soles. You know, stick them together. But I never worked on the whole shoe. But then one day the boss came to get me and he wound up putting me on the machine. [Unclear], you know, cutting the leather. You know? I says, no. I says if you want me to work here I don't want no machine. And I don't want no piece work.

Y: You don't like machines?

M: I don't like machines. No, not the sewing, not the machines in the shoe shop. (Y: Why not?) Because I didn't like it, because once you know the machine they won't let you work unless you're on piece work. See?

Y: So you don't like machines, you don't like piece work. (M: Piece work, no) What else you don't like?

M: Well I, I like to work. (Y: Laughs) I like to work, but I didn't have to do that, because there were jobs that I could do without piece work. You know? I wasn't uh, I wasn't going, I didn't go to work to say, I'm going to go to work, I'll work ten months, I'll be a millionaire after that. No. You couldn't be millionaire. You could work all your life in the mills, you'd never be a millionaire.

Y: And what about uh, I asked the same question, did you like that job in the Ayer Mill?

M: Oh I like, I liked it, yeah. It was nice because there was no kids. See the shoe shops around here, they were all young kids. And they made it miserable for you. They'd grab all the work. That piece work, see what I mean? They grab all the best work. And if you were on piece work, or even on day pay, you get all the junk. See, and the bosses wouldn't say anything as long as they got the work out of them.

Y: And so the kids, they, they grab (--)

M: The best work. See, over there, no. Over there there was all families, family. It was a small town. The whole town worked in that shop. You know?

Y: What do you mean family?

M: Families that lived around the shoe shop in Ward Hill. You know? They were all elderly. I don't want to say old. Elderly people.

Y: Mature, mature people.

M: Yeah, that's what they were. There was no kids. And it was beautiful then. We got along so nice.

Y: Did you develop any relationship?

M: No, no. They were (--)

Y: I mean friend, did you make friends?

M: Oh friends talk. Oh yeah. Oh yeah. When you work with somebody you got to make friends.

Y: But you did not invite them to your house, or you did not go there?

M: Oh no, no, no. No, no.

Y: So friends just uh (--)

M: Just friends in the shop. (Y: Yeah) I meet you in the street, hi, how are you, and that's it.

Y: So you worked in the mills, textile mills. You worked the toy shop.

M: And I worked in the shoe shop.

Y: Shoe shop. And uh, if you um, make, which shop did you like the best?

M: Well I like it when I went to Raytheon, because I made more money.

Y: Oh you worked in Raytheon? (M: Oh yeah) Oh, I thought you worked in Western Electric.

M: No, no. Went to Raytheon.

Y: When did you work in Raytheon?

M: I got a job in Raytheon [pause] (--)

Y: After the shoe shop?

M: Oh yeah! After the shoe shop. I was working in the shoe shop when this girl, she was a neighbor of ours, she worked in the office in Raytheon. And she got us the job, me and my sister, the one who works upstairs, lives upstairs. And uh, she called us up. She says uh, come in tomorrow for an interview. You know? So uh, I wasn't, I wasn't working then. I was home with my father. And uh, so we went. We got an interview I think it was a Thursday or a Friday. And then uh, they wanted us to start then. And uh, I says, oh no. I says, I can't. I says, how about Monday? So we got a job. We went to work the both of us, I don't know if it was December the 6th, or December the 16th. (Y: Which, what year?) '57 I think. '57. And I worked there twelve years.

Y: Did they give you a test? Some people took tests.

M: Yeah, the eye test.

Y: The physical examination?

M: Oh yeah, they give you a physical, oh yeah. But the worst one I hated was the vision, the double vision. The color, the color, you know? They give you all them colors and you got to distinguish the number, or the letter in between.

Y: Why was it important?

M: Well see over there they got a lot of work. It's fine work. Wires and things.

Y: But uh, different colors?

M: Different colors. No, but that, not that. For the, the colors of the wires were different, yes. But I mean you know, what's the name? C I? I'm starting to forget a lot of things. Um, color blind. Color blind. That's what it is. See they get, they give you a thing that you got to look through and there's all different colors. But in the center there's either a letter or a number. But that there, I passed that with flying colors.

Y: Yeah. What was your job then? What did you do?

M: Well I was a cable maker.

Y: Cable maker.

M: We make cables. Then I worked at that for two years. Then I went on inspection.

Y: What did you inspect?

M: Cables.

Y: Oh, that was your specialty?

M: Yeah. See (--)

Y: First you make cables, and then you expect uh (--)

M: Yeah, yeah. So when I went on cables I was making, on inspection I was making more money after two years.

Y: So compared with textile and shoe shop, was it a better job?

M: It was a better job for the money, but it was more of a mind job.

Y: Mind job? You didn't like it?

M: Well not too much. But I stayed twelve, twelve years. The money was good.

Y: So if I would ask you what makes a good job, what would you say personally?

M: A job that you like. That you say, ooh, I'm going to work this morning. I'm so happy I'm going to work. No, not me. I didn't like it that much.

Y: No? (M: No.) Did you wish sometimes when you on your way going to the job, did you wish that you were going somewhere else?

M: Oh no, no. (Y: No?) No. No, I never wished that. And I never wished, oh today I'm not going to work hard. I'm going to try to slack. I never did. Never.

Y: You always did your best?

M: I always did my best.

Y: Did you take pride of what you did?

M: Oh yeah, yeah! See, I was (--)

Y: Regardless, regardless where you worked? Toy shop, or uh, shoe shop, or (--)

M: Oh yeah. I worked with this German girl, woman. She lives on the housing projects down there. Her and I, we were, see they used to hire girls in, the girls are like, in my department they used to promote them. Like I went to inspection. And um, her and I, we used to get the hardest cables, the heaviest ones. We needed a table half of this room to put on, to work on the cable. But we didn't mind.

Y: So it involved physical (Y: yeah the cables were heavy) lifting?

M: They were heavy. Yeah. And when we had to tie them, you know, they all went with numbers like. See this, this wire had a contact with this wire. See. I would buzz her, she would buzz here. If we got the wrong wire it wouldn't buzz. (Y: I see) See, and that's how we, but we were, at the end we got smart. We put all masking tape in the numbers of the wire that was on the print. We had to go by a print, you know? And uh, and then after we got all that done the buzzer was easy. I go on fifteen, you go on fifteen. I go on seventeen, you go on seventeen.

Y: So you worked in a team, in a small team kind of (--)

M: No, no. Just two.

Y: Just two people worked together?

M: [Whispering] Two people, just two people.

Y: Was there any bonus system like Western Electric had?

M: Yeah, they had uh, sometimes like if uh, the department, if you made 100%, or 101%, 102% there you get a prize.

Y: Prize?

M: You know, like a \$25.00 bond, or uh, some, some little thing, you know? They'd let you know that you did good, and you got, got something. Now they give good prizes. They give a lot of money out.

Y: Did you expect while you were working in the mills, or later in the toy shop, or shoe shop, or whatever, some people say if you make a compliment to a worker, a manager, if the manager comes and says, hey Mary, you do a really good job, I like what you do. And uh, some people say that workers like that kind of compliment. It lasts more than giving them more money. Do you agree with that?

M: No I don't. I never did. No, people (--)

Y: Did you expect such kind, such uh, compliments? Such uh (--)

M: Well he did it to me when he wanted to put me on the machine. I says, no Mr. Paine, I don't want, I don't want no machine. I want to work on the bench. If you have work for me on the bench, okay. Unless I'll quit. You know? He says, but gee, he says, you're a good worker and I like to see you make more money. I says, I'm not uh, I'm not interested in the money. You know? I'm not! I wasn't! I wanted to get out of the house. See. After my mother passed away there was nobody home, just my father. For awhile he was home. And uh, but I mean to say, I didn't need the money that much. You know? But he told me, he said, you're a good worker, you mind your own business, you get along with everybody. Wherever I, even [unclear] lived here. He could talk to anybody, mention our name. We don't bother with nobody, but they're all my friends. Every one of them. You know? But I, I don't come in your house, I don't go in nobody's house. It's not my way of liking people. I like them for what they are. Not that I go in their house and they give me cup of coffee. No. (Y: No?) No.

Y: And uh, was uh, working at Raytheon, was it different from being a textile worker?

M: Oh yeah! You go to Raytheon, you dress up. And you stay with the clothes you have on all day. Tomorrow you come you got a different outfit. You know what I mean? But in the mills, what we wore going to work, we used to take it off there and put like an overall, another thing over us so we wouldn't get dirty. It was dirty. Greasy. But over there, no. No. And then you're sitting down all the time, do work, or standing, whatever was more convenient for you. But in the mills it was always standing.

Y: What about the bosses. Section hands?

M: Oh, some of them were good and some weren't. But hey, as long as you did your work they didn't bother you.

Y: What I mean was uh, was there any favoritism?

M: Oh yeah! That goes on every place. Raytheon worse. (Y: How worse?) Worse! Because they used to take the girls out, see? And naturally while they were at work they had to show (--)

END OF TAPE ONE

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Tape two, side one, blank. Side two begins midway through tape.

Y: He said uh, he was working at Raytheon, or Western Electric. And he said um, there was so many ladies around. He was I guess the lady man sort of. And he was chasing them, or they were chasing him, whatever. So uh, I guess the value system changed since (M: Oh yeah!) textile mills.

M: Night and day! Night and day! Night and day it changes. In textile there was a Second Hand. His name was uh, Ernest, Ernest [last name unclear].

Y: Italian man?

M: No, no. Limie. Englishman.

Y: Limie you say?

M: The Limies, the Englishman, they used to call them Limies.

Y: Limies, I don't know that. (M: Yeah) Um.

M: Well this guy, now he, he liked me and he liked my sister. The both of us. He liked us. But we weren't the type that he'd go by and touch you, or this. We weren't that type. You know? He liked us as a worker, you know, but we weren't that type. Well other girls, even married woman, they used to bring him sandwiches in the bag. They used to go in one, between two machines, they used to have boards. They used to put it on there and he new where to go. If he saw a bag there he went and got it, because that was for him. You know, but we didn't like this touching. I never liked that, you know? So, so that was going on from, from the mills. But in Raytheon, Raytheon there's more people. You're closer, you know? And uh (--)

Y: Closer, the working space?

M: Yeah. See they work in, they work in benches. You know? Row here, row there, row there, and there were table other where. Depends on the departments. And there was a lot of stuff going on.

Y: What I meant was I thought maybe the values changed. The moral values, you know? (M: Of the people?) Of the people in 1920's, 30's, 40's, (M: Oh yeah!) people controlled. There was a social control. And later in Raytheon nobody new. Is it true that people were career. They felt they could do anything. I mean girls and boys.

M: Oh no, I don't think there was that. (Y: No?) Oh no. No, I don't think there'd be any kind of a business, and the bosses would let you think that you, you control the place. No. You know? They're the bosses. Wherever you go, they're the bosses. You know. But if you can get away with it, get away with it.

Y: I heard that uh, in the textile mills, some section hands even pinch the girls.

M: Yeah, you know? But see we didn't like that. I never liked that.

Y: How did you make it clear that you don't?

M: Well you can, keep away from them. Keep away from them. But the others, they just stand there, they see him come and they hand their hands all over.

Y: Although married uh (--)

M: Oh even married. They're the worst ones. They think they can get away with it I guess. I don't know.

Y: Umhm. And as a result did they get better uh, (M: sometimes) position? Better [unclear] uh?

M: Uh, sometimes. I had one section hand that I worked for in the Ayer Mill toward the end. And uh, he was nice. He was nice to me. Not because I, I didn't anything for him, because I did my work. And one time he come up to me, he says uh, are you going to, you going to, it's your week to stay out next week, because so and so got only one week and you had two. So I never answered back, you know, but I thought it was kind of funny. So I says to him, I says, okay. So I uh, the next week I didn't go to work, because I was laid off for that week. And then I was thinking, and I thought, and I thought, and I thought. And I knew that I hadn't work that week that he says that I worked two weeks. You know? So when I went in after the following Monday, he comes near me with the book, he says, you know, he says, I made a mistake with you. I says, you did? He says, yeah. He says, you were suppose to work last week. He says, but he told me that I had worked two weeks. This was the second hand told the section hand. You know? So I says, well I says, I figured that out myself while I was home too. I was going to tell you now. You know. He says, he says I'll make it up to you. And he did. He gave me

my week that I was out. And I wasn't suppose to be.

Y: Wow, he paid you?

M: No, no, he made me work an extra week and laid the other girl off. See. I didn't get any, any extra, but I got the week that was due me. You know? So that's the story. They, they do it every place. Now, me, when I left the, the, when the Ayer Mill closed I felt bad, because I was with them people twenty-six years. You know? Twenty-six years! When I got a job in the Ayer Mill, you know, when you fill in the application where did you work last, how long did you? I says, twenty-six years. They looked at me, they says, twenty-six years? I says yeah. He says, you liked the job that bad, that much? I said, not that I liked the job, I says, I liked the people I worked with and the job wasn't that bad, you know. And they, they were, they were uh, appalled the way I worked twenty-six years in one place.

Y: And I guess you were not the only one. Some women (--)

M: There was a lot that worked there a lot of years, you know? A lot of them. And then there were some, like the older women especially, the married women, like they home for babies, and they stayed out maybe two, three years at a time. Like you know, me, I was single in the beginning and I worked all the while, and even after I got married. You know? So, but uh, they were appalled the time like when I uh, retired. I was home sick. October, November, December, I was sick. And uh, and I was going to be sixty-three in January. Sixty-three. So when I was sick I was in the hospital twice. I says, what am I working for? I have no kids. What am I working for. I'm killing myself. Anyway, he always told me don't go to work. He never wanted me to work.

Y: Where were you when you were sixty-three? Working at Raytheon?

M: Raytheon, yeah.

Y: Did you quit?

M: Yeah. So we talked it over. He says good. He says, he was home four years already, retired. You know, and then I retired four years after him. And uh, when I went in on a Monday, all the girls come up to me. I was missing from there three months and a half that I was sick. They all come up to me, they made me feel so guilty that I was going to quit. So I didn't tell the boss anything. You know, when he come and pick me up go home, he says, "did you tell you boss?" I says, "no." I says, "I cried so much when all them girls come."

Y: You cried you said?

M: I, they cried, come to me they were so happy to see me come back, you know? So I said, "I'll tell them tomorrow." That was Tuesday. When I went in on the Tuesday, when I got my group leader and the boss together, I went up to them right away and I says, "Dick, Bob, I'm quitting. I'm retiring." They left with their mouth open. You know? I told them and I went back to my job. You know? So after they were done talking they come up, "why?" "You're not

old enough!" I says, "I'm old enough." I says, "I worked a year longer than a lot of others." Sixty-two you could retire then. They didn't want me to retire. Then I says, "no, I'm retiring." I used to walk down the spare floor when I had to go to the office and make out my insurance, there's blue cross, blue shield, all that stuff. The other section hands, other uh, bosses, they used to call me. They'd say, "Mary, why are you retiring? You're not retiring age." I said, "yeah, I'm going to be sixty-three in a couple of days, you know?" They didn't want to believe me. Nobody wanted to believe me, but I retired and I was glad I retired.

Y: Can you imagine yourself, like your mother staying at home and not working?

M: If you have a family, yes.

Y: So you think you would uh (--)

M: I would have loved to stay home if I had a family, but staying home all alone, what are you going to do?

Y: Clean, and clean, and (--)

M: Oh no, no. I like to be clean, but I'm not that crazy.

Y: And the bosses in the mills? Were there any Italian?

M: Oh yeah, they were section hands. (Y: Section hands?) Section hands. They have like uh, in a big room like, you know? They'd have uh, I don't know about how many, ten, ten machines. But the machines were long. You know? A hundred eight bobbins. A hundred ten bobbins. Oh, and uh, those are section hands. They take care of that section. Then another section hand take care of another section. And then they had the second hand, and then the boss in the mill.

Y: But women did not work as section hands? (M: No, it was all men) Never?

M: Not that I know of. Not while I worked.

Y: Do you think it is fair?

M: Well then the women thought they were women, and they had to do only women's work. Now the women are smart and they want to do any kind of a job. And they can do it.

Y: What was women's work? I mean in the mills there were women's work and men's work?

M: Yeah. Well see, we were mostly all women. There were men too that did spinning work. There were a lot of men, you know, but not too many.

Y: Which jobs were women's work in the mills?

M: Which job? There was mending. (Y: Mending) That's one of the best jobs in the room.

And them Irish ladies, and French ladies that had the job before you, they would never let you come in and learn the job. Never! In a million years they would never. That was there, there dominion, you know? The mending room. Oh yeah! People went through a lot with some of these people. They had a job better than you and better than me. And they kept it that way.

Y: Did you work at the same spinning machine all the time, or you change your place?

M: Yeah. No, unless it was slack. If it was slack they didn't have all the machines running. They'd put you in another section. Naturally the machines were [unclear].

Y: But otherwise you always kept the same machine?

M: The same, yeah. If the mills were running full, you always worked on your own, your own machines. Hey Eddy, will you shut that window, it's cold here? Shut the one in the bedroom too. (Background voice: thank you)

Y: Did you uh, did you feel kind of attached to your machine after working it twenty-six years?

M: Oh yeah! Oh yeah you keep them just so.

Y: Keeps them just what?

M: Just so! Just clean them, oh yeah!

Y: Took care of the machine? (M: Oh yeah) Is it true?

M: That's true. It's yours and you keep it the way you want. There was some, some women that didn't care, you know. But no, not me. I used to have the shiny, they used to shine the machines.

Y: So if, if you got the bad material so you couldn't spin, it would break probably.

M: Yeah, well when it breaks you can tell, because it isn't good from the woven into the bobbin. See? When you walk up and the down the machine you can tell where there's no end, no thread, you know? And uh, you just take it from the top, put it in, and then let it go around. And then stop the bobbin, pick the end over there and tie it up, and that's it.

Y: Was the spinning room very hot?

M: It was uh, the mills, all the room they were hot. The mule spinning is the hottest room.

Y: That was the, but not the regular spinning was not.

M: No, no. It was hot. If the weather was hot they didn't have no air condition then. You know? It was hot. The machine, when the sun, you'd get the sun on one side, then the sun goes around it comes in this side. If you get it in the after noon you died, because it's hot.

Y: But uh, did you tell me that the cotton mills were dangerous because (--)

M: Yeah, the, yeah the Italian people (--). See, the Everett Mill, most of the Polish people worked there. (Y: In Everett Mill?) Everett Mill. Maybe there were a few Italian, but I used to hear, even my mother and father when they used to talk, they say that the fuss from the cotton wasn't good for your lungs. You know? But the fuss from the woolen didn't hurt you. You know? They always used to say that, I remember. But uh, I never worked there and I never knew anybody that worked there neither. Only Polish, Polish people I knew.

Y: I wonder if they survived, or if really they died earlier than (--)

M: I, I don't know. I couldn't say that.

Y: But in the spinning room there were fuss in the air?

M: No, no, not in the air.

Y: Fiber flying?

M: No, no. See, they used to have a board, I don't know how to explain it. They had a board like, on the machine. There was rollers coming here. And they'd go through a, through a wire, through rollers, come out here. And if it broke, if it broke here on the board, well it would go around a little roller. And you could see the yarn going around there. So you go, you take that off. It comes off. You take the end, stop the bobbin, tie it, you know. That's where the fuzz used to stay. On that board. We had brushes, but we couldn't brush it while the machine was running. Because if we brush it while the machine was running the fuss from the brush would go in the yarn and go in the bobbin. See. And when it go into the weave room, that was uh, that was uh, slum. See, in the menders that's what they had to take out. And if an end broke, if two ends broke and they didn't see it before, well the menders had to fix that. But see the fuss was on the board. So, and in the inside.

Y: Since you worked for such a long time as a spinner, did the machine change over time? Did it, did the spinning machine (--)

M: No, no, all the same. (Y: All the same?) The only thing that changed while I was there, was towards the end. And that's why we never thought that the mill was going to close. See, there was, each machine had their own belt, had their own belt. There was a, I forget what they call them, pulley that the belt went in. And then it hooked on to your, to your machine. And then they had one big pulley. One big pulley with straps this wide. One going this way, one going that way. You know? And that took care of so many machines. See? And towards the end, not even a year before the mills closed, they put, each machine had their own pulley. See? Each machine had their own pulley. They spend thousands of dollars, and not even nine months after they closed the mill. We never thought that they would do that, but they did.

Y: Since you like your machine so much, how did you feel when uh, (--)

M: Well I felt, I felt bad for the whole job. (Y: Yeah) Yeah, because I, I enjoyed working there, twenty-six years.

Y: It's not uh, it's a quarter of a century. Quarter of a century. And uh, so that was the only change in machines?

M: That's the only change they did. The machine was the same. The only thing there that used to change like, was the work. The yarn, they're thicker, thinner. And they had to change the pulleys in the front and the gears. They had to change the gears. See they used to let it run for a little bit, then take it out. I don't know how many times they used to wrap it around, and they used to weigh it. And then they could make sure what kind, what number gear to put on for that kind of work. (Y: Who decided that?) The section hand.

Y: So the section hand changed the gears?

M: He changed the gears, that's all. But as far as the machine went, it was always the same.

Y: And you say you were surprised that the mills closed down. (M: Oh yeah, especially that) You did not hear any gossip, any rumor that uh, (--) (M: No, nothing) They did not tell you that we were going to close, please look.

M: No! No! The Washington Mill, yes. That closed. Well we didn't get any, anything that (--) But then everybody started to talk after. They said, well if the Washington Mill closed, that was old, it's been here so many years, like you know. But nobody, nobody, nobody, me for one, never thought that mill would close. They were spending so much money on them pulleys.

Y: They kept that a secret kind of? (M: I don't know! I don't know how they) Well you were, you were somehow (--)

M: We weren't aware of it. We weren't aware that they were going to shut down.

Y: So it came then suddenly?

M: Surprise! Oh yeah!

Y: What did they say? Tomorrow we are closing it, or what?

M: Yeah. It says, the Ayer Mill was going to close a certain day, the 8th, the 8th of November, 1951.

Y: So you have a good memory. But uh, how, how many days or weeks in advance they told you?

M: Oh it wasn't long, no, not long. They just tell you the mill is going to close after a certain date. Go look for another job.

Y: What did you get after working (M: Nothing) twenty-six years?

M: Nothing.

Y: What do you mean nothing? (M: Nothing) No benefits?

M: You know who got money? They got a thousand dollars. The people that were over sixty-five I think. They got a thousand dollars. That's all.

Y: I heard that many people who tried to hide their ages, once they heard that sixty-five is the age to get thousand dollars, many people came over and said that I am also sixty (--) You did not get anything?

M: Not a thing.

Y: What did you get from Raytheon after working how many years? Twelve?

M: Twelve years. Oh I got a pension from there. I was getting thirty-one dollars a month.

Y: From Raytheon?

M: Yeah. (Y: That's all) Yeah, well see then it was low. But now, now they're getting so much a month. They work so many years, so much a year. So many years they give you, now I think they get nine dollars and change for every years they work there.

Y: Does your health insurance (--)

M: Oh yeah, I got, they pay half of my blue cross and blue shield.

Y: Raytheon. What about Ayer Mills?

M: No, nothing. Nothing.

Y: What did people know about Roosevelt? Your co-workers around you, did they like him?

M: Roosevelt? When he got in president? He raised our pay right away. From \$9.02 I started getting \$14.92.

Y: So uh, he was a hero I guess.

M: Oh yeah he was!

Y: Yeah. Talk about a little bit Raytheon. Can you tell me a little bit about uh, about the work? You say you tested, you were a tester, or inspector.

M: No, inspector.

Y: What did inspect? What one can inspect? Wire is wire. What is to inspect about it?

M: Well sometimes the wire, they call for say uh, not that big. Say a quarter of an inch and you put a half inch wire. It's not right. See? That's how they go by wide. And there were some uh, some places they had, if there were a lot of wires they have to put so many wires here, so many wires here, so many wires here, and so many wires here. And they had to tie them, that this had to come flat this wire. See? Because when they put it in the, the missile it had to to in a flat place. See? But then there was others that you could have a big, big thing like that, all wires, and you had to tie them all together tight with a nylon thread.

Y: Did you know what, what you were making? The end product? Did you know what you were producing? Did you know what you were producing in the Ayer Mills? Did you see the fabric at the end?

M: Oh yeah, they made beautiful fabric.

Y: How did you see it?

M: Well I used to, we used to buy it. We could buy it.

Y: So you saw it in the store, not in the mills?

M: No, no, in the mill. In the mill. And every week they uh, elect um, one of the boys used to take care of the whole section. He used to go get a bag full of rags where they had the material and we used to clean our machines with it. You know, they used to strip the rags, all the odd pieces that weren't good. And they used to give us two a piece, every week, and we had to clean our machines. We had to do cleaning every week for the machines, see.

Y: But did you know what you were producing at Raytheon?

M: Yeah! At Raytheon? (Y: What? Yeah, Raytheon) Missiles.

Y: But did you see any?

M: Oh yeah. We saw them. (Y: You saw them) Yeah, in the beginning, before. The beginning when I first got hired the missiles were ooh, longer than this room, way longer! But now they had the Hawk. The last time I saw one there it was the Hawk. the Hawk was ooh, from here to the wall. So small. A difference.

Y: Were you scared when you saw first time the missile?

M: No, we weren't scared, because when they took us around they had the missile. What was the name of it? I forget the name of it. It was big! They had it covered. You know? They had it covered. It looked just like when you're going to see a wake, you know? But it was, it was interesting. Yeah.

Y: Were you proud? I think Raytheon was the company which provided missiles and things to go to the moon. Was it, is it true?

M: Oh, I don't know where they went.

Y: I mean uh, were you proud that you were (--)

M: Well now, now I can see. Now I got a magazine every month from Raytheon, you know? And uh, and the things that they do for the, they still work, do things for the government.

Y: I mean were you proud that you were associated with Raytheon? (M: Oh yeah, yeah) Why?

M: Why? Because you say, well I helped to make that, you know?

Y: Why, the same feelings that you had when you were working in the shoe shop? Or uh, Toy Shop?

M: No, the shoe shop, no. You know, because me, I never, I always said, I says I wish I never reach that I have to go work in the shoe shop. But I went. But I didn't go because I had to. I went because I had to get out of the house. You know?

Y: What about the textile. Did you, did you uh, do you consider yourself as a textile worker? Being a textile worker comes first, or Raytheon.

M: Well uh, textile is past now. Raytheon I think more, because that's my last job.

Y: That's the most recent job, yeah.

M: Yeah.

Y: Well um, thank you very much. And um, that was very enjoyable talking to you. And that is the end of the tape.

end of tape II